

Name of Practice: VOLUNTARY COMMODITY COVER CROP  
DCR Specifications for No. VSL-8D

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's voluntary small grain cover crop for nutrient management and residue management best management practice that are applicable to all contracts entered into with respect to that practice.

A. Description and Purpose

This practice is to document and establish vegetative cover on cropland for protection from erosion and the reduction of nutrient losses to groundwater. Harvesting for hay, haylage, silage, grain, or seed is permitted after March 14. Early and standard planting dates are allowed.

This practice provides a cover on cropland, which will help prevent the loss of nutrients. The purpose is to reduce erosion and the leaching of nutrients to ground water. This BMP is designed to utilize the maximum amount of residual nitrogen from previous surface nutrient applications and in the first three feet of the soil profile.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. No nutrients from any sources are allowed between the harvesting of the previous crop and March 1 of the next calendar year. No nutrients are allowed at planting.
2. A good stand and good growth of vegetative winter cover must be obtained by December 1 to protect the area from nutrient leaching and runoff in the fall and winter, with the exception of the cities of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach that have late November planting dates. All cover crop plantings must maintain a minimum of 60% cover crop plant material on the enrolled acres from December 1 through the lifespan of the practice. (Ongoing research in Virginia's coastal plain indicates that a cereal grain crop with 30 plants per square foot of field planted with two tillers per plant (60 tillers per sq. ft.) by December 1 provides the optimum biomass for scavenging excess nitrogen while protecting the soil from erosion).
3. All seed must be free of prohibited noxious weed seed, have a minimum germination rate of 80% and have no more than 16 restricted noxious weed seeds per pound. If the grower elects to use home grown seed, it must be tested for purity, germination and noxious weeds prior to seeding by a recognized seed laboratory.
4. The practice is intended to keep a vegetative cover on cropland, which will help prevent the loss of nutrients, by reducing surface erosion and absorbing any excess nutrients from the soil. Current research indicates that early planting of winter rye maximizes the cover crops environmental benefit in Virginia.

5. Harvesting for hay, haylage, silage, grain, or seed is permitted after March 14. Pasturing consistent with sound agronomic management is permitted as long as 60% cover is maintained through March 14.
6. Select one of following species and/or mixtures of species to plant in all soils:

Species	bu./acre
Rye (Tetraploid)	2 bu./acre
Winter Rye (not tetraploid)	2 bu./acre
Winter Barley	2 bu./acre
Winter Hardy Oats	2 bu./acre
Winter Wheat or Triticale	2 bu./acre
Winter Annual ryegrass	20 lbs./acre
Small grain mixtures with	1 bu./acre
a) legume† or	10 lbs./acre
b) Diakon (forage or tillage) radish or	6 lb./ acre
c) canola or rape	4 lbs./acre
Diakon (forage or tillage) Radish	6-8 lbs./acre°
mixture with annual rye grass	10 lbs./acre
Winter-hardy <i>Brassica</i> (canola/rape)	5 -7 lbs./acre°
mixture with annual rye grass	10 lbs./acre

† - legume = Crimson Clover, Austrian Winter Pea or Hairy Vetch

°Use higher seeding rates for pure stands and lower seeding rates for mixed species plantings

**Higher seeding rates are recommended for aerial seeding and non-incorporation seeding methods.**

7. Seeding of all seed types must be planted by the dates listed below:

Area	Early Planting Date	Standard Planting Date
Cities of Chesapeake & VA Beach	November 10	November 30
Coastal Plain (including the Eastern Shore)	October 25	November 15
Piedmont	October 10	November 1
Mountain and Valley	October 5	October 25

8. In all cases, this practice is subject to NRCS standard 340.
9. Soil loss rates must be computed for all applications.
10. The practice must not be in lifespan from any other conservation program.

11. Producers must be fully implementing a current Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) on all agricultural production acreage contained within the field that this practice will be implemented on. The NMP must comply with all requirements set forth in the Nutrient Management Training and Certification Regulations, (4VAC50-85 et seq.) and the Virginia Nutrient Management Standards and Criteria (revised July 2014), must be prepared and certified by a Virginia certified nutrient management planner, and must be on file with the local District. Plans shall also contain any specific production management criteria designated in the BMP practice (4VACV50-85-130G).

C. Technical Responsibility

Technical and administrative responsibility is assigned to qualified technical DCR and District staff in consultation, where appropriate and based on the controlling standard, with DCR, Virginia Certified Nutrient Management Planner(s), NRCS, DOF, and VCE. Individuals certifying technical need and technical practice installation shall have appropriate certifications as identified above and/or Engineering Job Approval Authority (EJAA) for the designed and installed component(s). All practices are subject to spot check procedures and any other quality control measures.

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